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EUROPEAN STREET GANGS AND URBAN VIOLENCE

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Introduction

Gangs are predominantly an urban phenomenon. From the seminal work of Thrasher (1927) that focused on gangs in Chicago almost a century ago, to the substantial global body of studies that has been established in recent decades, one factor that characterizes the vast majority of gang literature is its city-based context (Bradshaw 2005; Densley 2013; Esbensen and Carson 2012; Gutierrez Rivera 2010). Another characteristic feature of gang research is violence. Whilst studies have established a link between prior levels of aggression and the likelihood of someone joining a gang, gang involvement in turn appears to promote and facilitate enhanced levels of violence (Klein et al. 2006). Indeed, many ethnographies of gangs indicate that violence plays a central role in gang culture (Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Densley 2013).

The purpose of this chapter is to provide readers with an insight into gang-related violence, and responses to gang-related violence, across a number of European cities. To this end, it brings together city-specific sections written by subject experts who have resided and conducted research in four European countries: the UK, Belgium, Russia and Sweden. Each section of the chapter follows a similar structure: first, we provide contextual information about gangs in each city; second, we discuss data on gang member demographics; third, we consider the nature and scale of gang-related urban violence; and fourth, we outline some of the main policy responses aimed at tackling gang violence, including any references to public health approaches to violence reduction.

Studies that compare gangs across different jurisdictions are relatively rare. From obtaining the financial and social capital to make international comparative projects feasible, to establishing adequate levels of equivalence in research design and methods across diverse geographical locations, comparative research is seldom simple or straightforward (Beyens and McNeill 2013). The primary intention of this chapter is not to draw direct, like-for-like comparisons between the composition, nature or scale of gangs and gang-related violence across different European cities. The decision to include cities from four European countries in the chapter's scope – London, UK; Brussels, Belgium; Kazan and Moscow, Russia; and Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö, Sweden – represents a compromise between, on the one hand, our desire to avoid an overly narrow and skewed lens and, on the other, the need to provide an adequate level of analytic depth.

Whilst urbanization has brought about significant health benefits for billions of people across the globe, providing enhanced job opportunities and access to a range of important services and technologies, it has also generated a number of economic, social and environment determinants that have

the potential to impact negatively on people's health (Zuckerman 2014). Among the latter is the tendency for large cities to be afflicted by high rates of serious violence, often linked in some form to the prevalence of urban street gangs. By providing an in-depth examination of selected cities, this chapter provides some indication of the diversity of gangs and gang-related violence across Europe, whilst also indicating important areas of convergence. Each city-specific section draws on a range of data sources to provide readers with an insight into the most useful and up-to-date evidence available. The chapter also performs a useful function in flagging areas where data are lacking and thereby identifies areas that are particularly in need of better data-recording practices and further research.

London

Accounts of street gangs in the UK's capital date back at least to the nineteenth century, with youth violence characterizing much of the literature (Gray 2013). In recent years, however, there has been a marked increase in public and political concern around youth gang involvement in London, centred primarily on gang-related violence (Harding 2016; Home Office 2016; Newton 2017). Academic research is polarized: on the one hand, some researchers have argued that gang 'problems' are inflated by professionals and 'gang talkers' with vested interests in exaggerating the nature and scale of youth gangs (Fraser and Atkinson 2014; Hallsworth and Young 2008; Smithson and Ralphs 2016); other researchers, however, have sought to highlight the serious levels of violence committed by street gangs and the negative effects that gang involvement has on outcomes for young people (Densley 2013; Harding 2014; Pitts 2012).

With 8,787,892 inhabitants residing across an area of 607 square miles (1,572 square kilometres), London is the third largest city in Europe by population (Office for National Statistics 2017). It also has one of the greatest disparities in all of Europe with regard to wealth distribution: the top 10 per cent of households have amassed a combined wealth of £260 billion, compared to the bottom 10 per cent, who are indebted with a negative wealth of minus £1.3 billion (New Policy Institute 2017). An obvious and visible reflection of wealth inequality is manifested in the form of housing (see Figure 27.1). Figure 27.2, comprising two maps of London, one of gang territories and one of socioeconomic deprivation levels, provides a stark visual illustration of the overlap between the presence of youth gangs and deprived urban areas.

The left-hand side of Figure 27.2, uploaded to Google Maps in 2015, purports to delineate the territories of London's street gangs as of 2015: 33 in West London, 63 in East London, 51 in North London and 47 in South London, making a total of 194 street gangs, similar to the 186 gangs on a matrix compiled by the Metropolitan Police (MET), which serves the Greater London area (Bridges 2015; Osbourne 2015). From a geographic standpoint, clearly there is overlap between economic disadvantage and gang membership, a finding consistent with research from the US (Pyrooz et al. 2010).

Demographics of Gang Members

Most quantitative data available on gangs in London have not been generated by academic studies, but by the recording practices of government agencies. A freedom of information (FOI) request submitted in 2016 revealed the race/ethnicity breakdown of gang members on the MET's gangs matrix (Table 27.1).

It should be noted, however, that some have condemned the gangs matrix as a form of institutionalized racism that has led to the over-policing of Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities (Smithson et al. 2013). In large part, this is due to the opaque criteria and processes used to classify people as gang members (Williams 2015).¹



Figure 27.1 London streetscape. Urban street gangs in London are typically associated with relatively cramped and dilapidated housing estates and high-rise tower blocks. For example, the Locksley council estate in East London has historically been associated with a street gang known as the Limehouse Massive. As illustrated by the photo of the Locksley estate (middle), corporate skyscrapers and luxury apartment blocks situated in wealthy financial and business districts often loom over these housing estates, acting as a continuous reminder of significant wealth inequalities.

Photos: Kieran Larkin (top); Keir Irwin-Rogers (middle); Melisa Tokel (bottom).

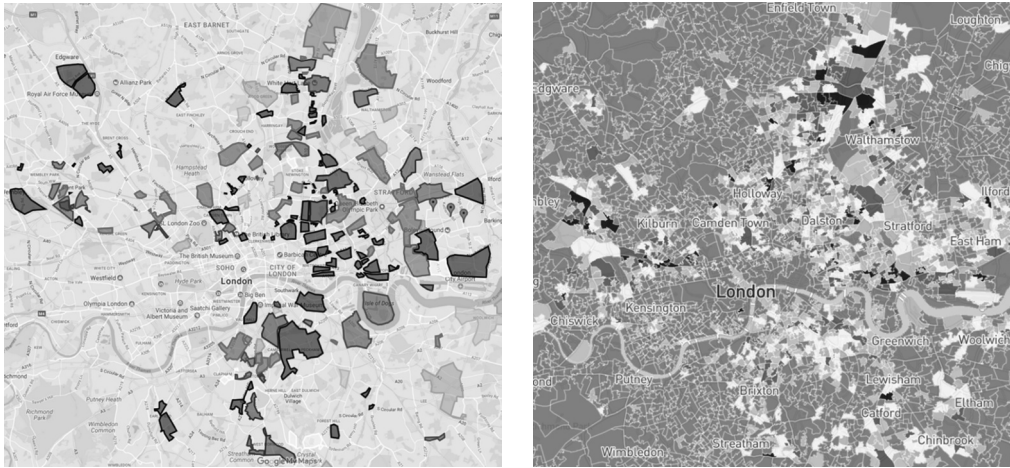


Figure 27.2 London gang territories (left); levels of socioeconomic deprivation (right).

Sources: Iain Agar; Mapbox; OpenStreetMap.

Table 27.1 Ethnic breakdown of gang members on the London gangs matrix

Code description	Number	Percentage
1 White – North European	342	9
2 White – South European	139	4
3 Black	2,907	78
4 Asian	224	6
5 Chinese, Japanese or South-East Asian	5	<1
6 Middle Eastern	98	3

Source: Metropolitan Police Service (2016).

An FOI submitted in 2014 revealed that ages on the matrix ranged from 13 to 53, with almost half of all gang members between the ages of 18 and 21 and less than 15 per cent under the age of 18 (Metropolitan Police Service 2014). It is worth highlighting that other sources of data on youth gang involvement indicate that the MET's gangs matrix may not provide a comprehensive portrait of London's gangs. For example, only 376 of the 858 young people identified as gang-involved by London's youth offending teams (YOT) featured on the MET's gangs matrix (MOPAC 2014). Moreover, a recent report published by the Children's Commissioner (2017) estimates that around 46,000 children aged between 10 and 18 are members of street gangs in the UK. In short, alternative sources of data suggest that the MET's gangs matrix is likely to constitute a considerable underestimate of the scale of young people's involvement in street gangs.

Gang-Related Violence and Offending

As with gang demographics, the best and most recent quantitative data available on gang-related violence come from police statistics. These suggest that violent offences constitute the largest share of gang-flagged crime (43 per cent), with drug offences occupying the second largest share (20 per cent) and robbery the third (11 per cent) (MOPAC 2014).

As shown in Figure 27.3, the vast of majority of serious youth violence in London is not flagged as gang-related. However, it is worth noting that there is considerable variation between different areas of the city, with almost one in five offences in the borough of Hackney being gang-flagged, compared to no gang-flagged offences in boroughs such as Richmond upon Thames and Hillingdon. These statistics should be treated with some caution. Offences are gang-flagged in the event that ‘any individual believes that there is a link to the activities of a gang or gangs’ (MOPAC 2017). Therefore, the data displayed in Figure 27.3 are only accurate to the extent that: 1) gang-related offences are recognized as such by someone willing and able to influence the crime-recording process; and 2) all beliefs about the gang-related nature of offences are accurate.

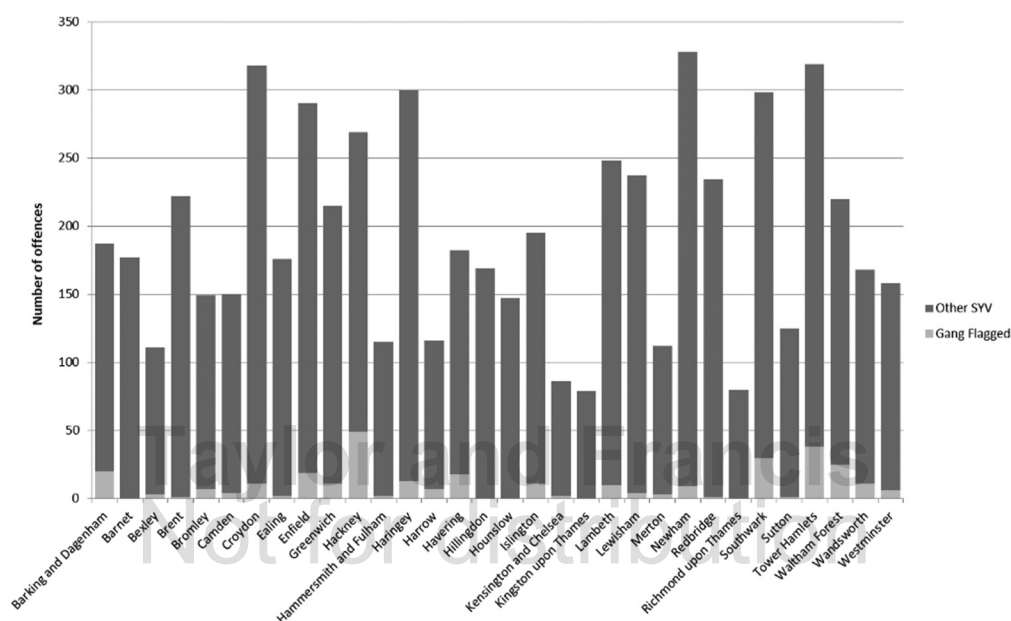


Figure 27.3 Proportion of gang-related serious youth violence by London borough.

Source: MOPAC (2014).

Table 27.2 Violent crime in London, 2015–2017

	2015	2016	2017 ¹
Violence with injury	72,788	74,968	38,290
Gang-flagged violence with injury	607	400	161
Homicide	119	110	72
Gang-flagged homicide	11	7	7
Gun crime with fatal or serious injury	86	127	69
Gang-flagged gun crime with fatal or serious injury	21	15	5
Knife crime with fatal or serious injury	1,215	1,295	918
Gang-flagged knife crime with fatal or serious injury	164	98	63

Source: Metropolitan Police Service (2017).

Note: 1 The data for 2017 relate to the period 1 January to 30 June – the latest data available at the time of writing.

A response to a freedom of information request received by the authors in August 2017 revealed data about gang-flagged crime in London as shown in Table 27.2.

According to these data, the proportion of violence with injury offences in London flagged as gang-related was just 0.8 per cent in 2015 and 0.5 per cent in 2016. In relation to homicides, however, gangs were recorded as being responsible for a somewhat greater proportion of offences: 9 per cent in 2015 and 6 per cent in 2016. Moreover, in relation to homicides involving the use of firearms, gangs were implicated in a still greater proportion of offences: 20 per cent in 2015 and 21 per cent in 2016.

Whilst only a small proportion of violent crime in London appears to be gang-related, there are indications that gang members account for a much higher proportion of violence that results in serious levels of harm, especially homicide. In addition to the data generated by the 2017 FOI outlined above, it is worth noting that, in 2007, half of the 27 murders of young people in London perpetrated by other young people were flagged as gang-related (Centre for Social Justice 2009). Furthermore, statistics suggest that, in relation to knife crime that results in serious injury or murder, over one in five offences are gang-related (MOPAC 2016). Indeed, the evidence indicates that young people who are gang-involved are likely to be involved in disproportionate levels of violence, and particularly violence generating serious harm, compared to their non-gang peers (Vasquez et al. 2015). In-depth, ethnographic research exploring gang violence in London suggests that gangs typically evolve from unstructured adolescent peer groups that engage in expressive forms of violence, to relatively organized groups that are likely to use violence instrumentally as a means of controlling and expanding illicit drug networks (Densley 2013).

In short, the relatively small proportion of London's serious youth violence flagged as gang-related does not indicate the absence of a link between gang involvement and enhanced levels of violence, but instead reflects the fact that the large majority of young people residing in the capital are not involved in gangs. Those who are involved in gangs appear to be involved in a greater quantity and severity of violence than young people who are not involved in gangs.

Responses to Gang Violence

In 2011, the UK government published a report examining the scale and nature of gang-related youth violence. It concluded that 'a concerted, long-term effort' was needed, comprising support to local areas most affected by gang violence, pathways out of gang culture for young people, prevention initiatives to keep young people from joining gangs, and punishment and enforcement to suppress violence (Home Office 2011). This led to the Ending Gang and Youth Violence (EGYV) programme, which ran between 2012 and 2015 and has now been replaced by an Ending Gang Violence and Exploitation (EGVE) programme (although EGVE has been allocated considerably lower levels of funding than its predecessor; Home Office 2016; Perraudin and Elgot 2016).

The EGYV programme involved a range of public, private and third sector organizations and operated nationally albeit predominantly across London boroughs. As part of the programme, Public Health England (2015) produced a report that considered youth gang involvement as a public health issue. It highlighted the enhanced risk of mental illness faced by gang-involved young people and suggested that initiatives such as home visiting, parenting programmes and school-based social and emotional development programmes offer ways in which to protect young people from risk factors associated with gang involvement and poor mental health. The report also advocated non-stigmatizing, holistic youth outreach services that engaged with young people in their own environments to protect health and emotional wellbeing. An earlier report, funded by the Department of Health, had highlighted the need to 'break an infective cycle within families, where violence is passed from one generation to another', advocating hospital-based services such as mentoring and counselling, as well as talking therapies, family therapies and family interventions (Bellis et al. 2012, p. 7).

An independent evaluation concluded that the quality of data mapping and sharing across a range of agencies had improved over the EGYV programme's life-cycle (Harding 2016). Whilst the evaluation cited 'positive outcomes' for the cohorts of young people involved, it was unclear what these outcomes constituted – no evidence for any reductions in gang-related violence was cited. The evaluation predominantly referred to processes, such as improved multi-agency collaboration, assessments and referrals, as opposed to concrete outcomes.

Some commentators have been fiercely critical of the UK government's response to gangs. Pitts (2017), for example, has argued that intensive and expensive support for families affected by gang involvement has been side-lined in recent years because of government spending cuts, only to be replaced with cheaper suppression-focused policies badged as 'improved alternatives'. Similarly, Shute et al. (2012) have criticized EGYV's attempts to address what are essentially social exclusion problems with policing and enforcement solutions that are liable to generate greater levels of community tension and gang-related violence.

Brussels

Gangs in Belgium are a localized and recent phenomenon, with Brussels being the only city with an established gang presence. When comparing the prevalence of gangs in Brussels to that of other cities, one should consider the city's characteristics. First, with a surface area of 62 square miles (161 square kilometres), Brussels is a relatively small city in a comparative global context. In fact, Brussels would fit about eight times into the City of Los Angeles and more than ten times into the City of London. Despite its small size, Brussels also constitutes a distinct region bordering Flanders and Wallonia. Second, Brussels' population is exceptional on a number of grounds, including its cultural and age composition. With an average age of 37, Brussels' population is considerably younger than that of the two remaining regions (an average age of 42 in Flanders and 41 in Wallonia). The city contains exceptional levels of multiculturalism and ethnic diversity. In 2008, 68 per cent of the 1,048,491 Brussels inhabitants had foreign origins, with 35 per cent of those coming from outside Europe. In Flanders only one out of ten inhabitants (13.3 per cent) and in Wallonia (22.5 per cent) two out of ten inhabitants have foreign roots (BRIO 2017).

Despite Brussels' inhabitants reporting gang issues in their neighbourhoods since the early 1990s, it was not until 2000 that the police began formally registering gang members. In 1999, the police gang database (DBSBU²) was created, which registered gangs, their members and specific gang-related offences. Since its foundation, however, the lack of a formal gang definition and the substantial loss of data in 2006 (due to software malfunctioning) have undermined the trustworthiness of gang data in Brussels. Gangs do show a close connection to specific spaces within Brussels. Many gang labels reflect either the postal code or the name of one of the 19 municipalities of Brussels, such as the Versailles gang, which is associated with Versailles Street, and the 1140 gang, which has a clear affiliation with the Germinal public housing estate.

Demographics of Gang Members

The data presented in this section were made available in 2009. At that time, 18 different gangs were registered, with a total of 431 members (CIA Brussels 2009). The ages of gang members ranged from 12 to 35 and involved an overrepresentation of the ages 15–22, following the established bell curve of youth crime (CIA Brussels 2009; Farrington 1986). In 2013, however, Brussels police estimated that 36 gangs with 652 members occupied the streets of Brussels' Capital Region (Laeremans 2013). The gang issues in Brussels reflect many of the city's multicultural characteristics. In general, police gang units differentiate between Sub-Saharan, Maghrebin (or North African) and mixed gangs (containing members of various ethnic background including native Belgians).³

Gang-Related Violence and Offending

While all gangs in Brussels engage in a cafeteria style of offending, there are some characteristics believed to be particular to some gangs, as set out in Table 27.3. However, in considering these numbers, one should be aware of the primordial role that police perception plays in generating these statistics, as no formal definition is used in the gang labelling process. In fact, in the view of the majority of gang unit officers, the only 'real' gangs in Brussels are the Sub-Saharan gangs. When interrogating this perspective, police officers refer especially to the particularly violent nature of these gangs, while other gangs are considered to be more profit-oriented. Or, as one police officer put it:

You have to draw a difference between the black gangs and other groups, especially the Maghrebin groups. The Sub-Saharan gangs copy the American model and South African gangs. The Maghrebin gangs have in contrast to the black ones, no gang beefs. They (Maghrebin gangs) do not fight amongst each other for turf or other futile reasons.

(Nluandu 2009)

These assertions are borne out by the police statistics presented in Table 27.3. The crime percentages for the category of Sub-Saharan gangs are based on 297 gang members who committed 3,111 offences in total. The percentages for the category of Maghrebin gangs are based on 90 gang members who together committed 1,045 offences. Finally, the percentages for the category of mixed gangs are based on 44 gang members who committed a total of 402 offences.

Table 27.3 Crime attributed to Sub-Saharan, Maghrebin and mixed gangs¹

	Sub-Saharan gangs		Maghrebin gangs		Mixed gangs	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Qualified theft	668	21.5	369	35.3	155	38.6
Drugs crime	573	18.4	134	12.8	26	6.5
Violent crime	563	18.1	135	12.9	40	10.0
White-collar crime	306	9.8	79	7.6	34	8.5
Weapons	293	9.4	38	3.6	12	3.0
Simple theft	257	8.3	66	6.3	59	14.7
Threats and insults	154	5.0	120	11.5	24	6.0
Other crime	123	4.0	37	3.5	13	3.2
Vandalism	116	3.7	55	5.3	35	8.7
Sexual offences	58	1.9	12	1.1	4	1.0
	3,111	100	1,045	100	402	100
Violent offences	914	29	185	18	56	14
Property crimes	1,231	40	514	49	248	62
Drugs offences	573	18	134	13	26	6
Disturbing public order	270	9	175	17	59	15
Other crime	123	4	37	4	13	3
	3,111	100	1,045	100	402	100

Source: CIA Brussels (2009).

Note: 1 These statistics are the result of an analysis performed on the police gang database – the Database Stadsbendes/Bandes Urbaines (DBSBU) – in 2009. The classification 'property crime' includes the categories: qualified theft, simple theft and white-collar crime. The classification 'violent offences' comprises the categories: violence, sexual offences and weapons. The classification 'disturbing public order' contains the categories: threats and insults and vandalism.

To reiterate, the extent to which these statistics are an accurate reflection of gang-related crime in Brussels, or an artefact of police enforcement decisions remains uncertain. However, even taking into account some degree of enforcement bias, the rate of Sub-Saharan gangs' violent offences is considerably higher than that of Maghrebin gangs or mixed gangs. It is also worth noting that there are strong indications that the overrepresentation of Sub-Saharan gangs in drugs offences is mainly due to police registration bias (Van Hellemont 2017).

Consistent with police perspectives, non-Sub-Saharan gangs seem to have a clear orientation to profit-motivated activities. So, while the largest share of all gangs' criminal activities is property crimes, it is especially dominant in the case of the mixed gangs (63 per cent), compared to Maghrebin gangs (49 per cent) and Sub-Saharan gangs (39 per cent). Maghrebin gang members are charged at a relatively high rate for disturbing public order (17 per cent); threats and insults to police make up 70 per cent of these public order offences.

A range of professionals involved in prevention and repression policies agree, however, that it is not necessarily the amount of violence that sets Sub-Saharan gangs apart from other gangs so much as the degree and nature of the violent offences. Gang homicides involving weapons, for instance, are a unique characteristic of Sub-Saharan gangs in Brussels. Whilst 16 of such homicides have been recorded since 2005, the precise number is difficult to estimate, as the police typically neglect to distinguish between homicides that are gang-related and those that are not. It is likely that this number overestimates the true level of gang homicides. For instance, if gang homicide is redefined as a homicide committed by a gang member against another gang member, this would reduce 'gang homicides' occurring since 2009 from five to one (Van Belle 2009, p. 2). In any case, the numerous non-lethal but spectacular fights that occur with Sub-Saharan men as perpetrators and victims are more important. Or, as recounted by police officers:

These [Sub-Saharan] gangs' engagement in crime is actually not exceptional, but the degree of violence in gang confrontations is absolutely mind-blowing! There is something really particular to the Black [Sub-Saharan] gangs. The degree of violence, the choice of weapons: machetes, pliable saws, knives, sabres, hammers. Exceptional violent scenes! Other gangs mostly fight bare hand or use occasionally a knife. But the Black gangs . . . they always have this arsenal of weapons on them. I don't even understand where they put it.

(Police officer Evre 2)

These fights are not common occurrences, but when they do occur they often have an extraordinary and public character. In 2010, for example, a young Sub-Saharan man affiliated with the 1140 gang was stabbed to death by four members of the Versailles gang at the entrance of a dance hall (Van Hellemont 2015). More than 50 bystanders witnessed the attackers stabbing the victim several times using sabres and knives, pursuing and ultimately killing him when he tried to escape. While these events are spectacular, these forms of lethal violence are rare within the Brussels Sub-Saharan gang world. Moreover, ethnographic work revealed that many gang-related violent offences are instances of 'incompetent violence' (Collins 2009; Van Hellemont 2015). Rather than an offence being driven by a strict 'code of the streets' (Anderson 2000), opportunism and fear play a prominent role in selecting the victim, time and place of retaliation.

Responses to Gang Violence

Police and prevention agencies have designed multiple projects and tools, such as the database on urban gangs (DBSBU), to facilitate gang prosecution. In fact, the same circular of the Prosecutor's Office that allowed for the construction of the gang database also created the label BU (*bandes urbaines* – urban gangs). The label BU is an instrument of prosecution intended to allow criminal

justice agencies to monitor gang members more closely. An offender is eligible for the BU label if he/she has committed 1) at least two out of the list of 14 offences defined as 'urban gang offences', 2) within a period of six months and 3) in a group (with more than one person). The label has two major consequences for its bearer: he/she 1) can be more easily subjected to invasive police practices, and 2) in case of a violation the offender will be automatically brought before a prosecutor or magistrate. However, while the name of the label alludes to gang affiliation, the wide scope of the label turned it into an instrument to increase control of multi-offenders in general, and it thus extends beyond gang membership.

At the time of this writing, professionals involved in preventive and repressive gang policies had reported significant difficulties in addressing what they define as the most harmful aspect of Sub-Saharan gangs: excessive and expressive forms of violence within the Congolese diaspora. Indeed, it is worth highlighting that policies in Brussels to tackle gangs and gang-related activities often fail to go beyond general initiatives aimed at reducing youth crime. To date, no public health approaches to reducing gang violence have been implemented in Brussels.

Kazan

The city of Kazan, situated on the Volga River about 800 kilometres from Moscow, is the capital of the Republic of Tatarstan and part of the Russian Federation. In their modern incarnation as entrepreneurial and territorial groups, gangs in Kazan emerged between 1970 and 1975 as youth peer groups with roles as violent enforcers in the shadow economy. This period saw the appearance of shadow producers (*tsekhoviki*) in the Soviet Union, when managers of state companies began 'off-the-books' production and distribution of goods. The new unregulated economic sector needed its structures of informal protection and enforcement, and these were provided by the so-called *thieves-in-law*, a closed society of professional criminals (Gurov 1990; Salagaev 2001). Young boys and men, brought up in the culture of tough masculinity, and involved in the networks of solidarity and reciprocity, and in some cases also having informal leadership, were a highly valuable resource for the *thieves-in-law*, who turned into 'violent entrepreneurs' (see Blok 1974; Volkov 2002), agents using violence for economic gain. The groups developed structures of leadership and internal discipline and started to use weapons. Other youth groups, who did not want to be subsumed by expanding entrepreneurial gangs, organized into more rigid structures, fighting to protect particular estates and territories from 'annexation' (see Figure 27.4).

At the end of the 1980s, the Soviet Union went through a deep crisis associated with economic liberalization and the end of the one-party state. Many young men began to develop 'alternative careers' in the informal and illegal economy. New cooperative businesses and private enterprises were emerging, and a vast array of entrepreneurial activities suddenly opened up at street level, including outdoor markets, small stalls and kiosks, parking lots, street drug trade and prostitution. State law enforcement was highly ineffective and corrupt, and could not guarantee safety for businesspeople or enforce business deals and obligations. Many of the existing street gangs moved to control the economic opportunities on their local turf, taking 'dues' from people involved in the street-level economy, with new gangs also emerging.

Demographics of Gang Members

The subject of street gangs has until recently been largely neglected by Russian academics. Similarly, law enforcement agencies have neglected to systematically collect data on gangs in Kazan. The most recent data come from an ethnographic research project conducted in Kazan in 2005–2011 (Stephenson 2015). The research revealed that gangs in this city are ethnically mixed, reflecting the diverse yet highly assimilated local population, and tend to be young men between the ages of



Figure 27.4 A Kazan housing estate associated with street gangs. This industrial area of the city was at the epicentre of gang violence in the 1990s. Although the biggest local gangs have been undermined by a series of gang trials, the district still has the highest level of crime in the city, with members of different street gangs fighting for territorial dominance.

Source: Anton Zimmerman.

16 and 30, with the leaders (usually the gangs' founding fathers) reaching up to 50 years of age. They have substantial memberships – up to 300 people in some areas. Younger boys from the age of 13 who are involved in local street peer groups have contact with the gangs that they aspire to join but cannot yet be accepted into as formal members.

According to local police experts, before the mid-1990s gang members tended to be young men from working-class backgrounds or delinquent school drop-outs. But over the years, as Kazan's gangs became institutionalized in the neighbourhood, they started to attract young men from well-off and highly educated families, including the families of businesspeople, doctors, lawyers and the police.⁴ The gang became an institution that locals could turn to if they became victims of crime committed by people outside the area, whose permission was needed if somebody wanted to open a small business in the neighbourhood, and whose leaders sometimes participated in community projects, building local mosques and churches, providing money for organized events and celebrations, or 'sponsoring' the local police (Stephenson 2015).

Gang-Related Violence and Offending

Kazan gangs are pursuing a variety of entrepreneurial strategies: offering protection to businesspeople, mediating in disputes, and protecting the underworld of gaming parlours, prostitution rings and the drugs trade. Younger gang members are primarily tasked with controlling small-scale economic operations, with more senior gang members controlling, and increasingly owning, large businesses, such as networks of supermarkets, agricultural holdings and large-scale drug businesses. Violence, and more often its threat, is an essential resource for illegal business activities, and gangs cultivate what Volkov (2002, p. 71) calls a 'reputation for resolve, or other qualities enabling effective control of possible threats'. For the gang to remain a successful enterprise, it must become a recognized force in the city. It can then enjoy an influx of new members, expand its business interests and deal more successfully with the demands of the city authorities and law enforcement agencies.

In the 1990s, when they were actively appropriating territory, gangs were involved in high levels of serious violence in which weapons such as firearms were routinely used. From the mid-1990s, however, gang wars began to subside as the Russian state became stronger. In recent years, violence is typically non-fatal and used to settle individual scores or as a general demonstration of a gang's strength. Nevertheless, conflict between individual members of different gangs or collective disputes over businesses can easily flare up and lead to organized conflicts. Whilst these conflicts are usually resolved through negotiation between gang leaders, younger members can be tasked with invading rival territory and orchestrating attacks if these negotiations fail. These attacks are often well-organized and involve the taking of hostages, with intelligence, such as the addresses of rival gang members, being obtained in advance to maximize the likelihood of success. The gang code in Kazan does not allow members to make empty threats involving the display of weapons; if knives or guns are brandished, gang members should be prepared to use them. The code therefore typically acts to limit both the use of weapons in conflict and consequent fatalities (Stephenson 2015).

Moscow

Like many other Russian cities, Moscow has a tradition of youth street socialization, which takes place in peer networks of various levels of organization (Gromov 2009). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, many Moscow gangs emerged in a similar way to that seen in Kazan, namely, by transforming themselves into 'violent entrepreneurs' and developing racket and protection networks. This was particularly the case in the depressed Moscow suburbs of Lyubertsy and Solntsevo (Gromov 2006).

With the city's growing economic prosperity in the twenty-first century,⁵ however, Moscow's gangs started to disintegrate, and many of their members, at least those who had survived the preceding violent gang wars, turned to legitimate or semi-legitimate activities.

Demographics of Gang Members

Street networks in Moscow typically comprise several friendship groups of six to eight members living in the same block(s) of flats with the same or neighbouring courtyards (see Figure 27.5).

The core contingent of the friendship groups is aged from 13 to 17, with predominantly male membership, although girls and young women may also be involved. Unlike ethnically mixed Kazan gangs, contemporary Moscow territorial networks tend to be composed largely of ethnic Slavs. While the members of the Kazan gangs come from a variety of social backgrounds, Moscow groups unite young people from predominantly the working and lower class (Stephenson 2012).

Gang members' collective identity as representatives of the local turf becomes juxtaposed to that of their 'enemies'. Young people who are members of alternative subcultural groups, for example punks, rappers or visible homosexuals, may all be designated as enemies and subjected to violent attacks. Ethno-nationalist discourse is an important part of the construction of 'us versus them', and people from Central Asia or the Caucasus are routinely victimized.

Gang-Related Violence and Offending

Although they share many pursuits with mainstream youth, gang members are also involved in violent and other criminal activities. Some sustain their street lifestyle by petty crime, mainly through stealing or shoplifting. The motive for acquisitive crime is typically short-term and hedonistic rather than long-term and calculating, with money being spent on peer group activities involving gaming machines or the consumption of alcohol or marihuana. Gang members also steal cars, sometimes to sell to local criminals for small sums of money, but often simply for fun – to engage in joyriding before abandoning the vehicles.

While acquisitive crime is generally episodic and not displayed by all gangs or their members, everybody is involved in violent battles for control over their neighbourhood. This includes intimidation of the non-affiliated youth and warfare aimed at enhancing status and protecting territory. Some gang members extort money, watches and mobile phones from other young people, predominantly non-affiliated local youth and outsiders who intrude into the gang's local territory. Unlike in Kazan, there are no institutionalized neighbourhood gangs that recruit young people for entrepreneurial criminal activities (see Table 27.4). Most gang-related street crime in Moscow is inseparable from the overall goal of reproduction of the group as collective masters of the street. Young men use it to confirm their power in their area, demonstrating the right to dictate the rules of behaviour to other participants of the street space. Street victimization is only partially oriented towards material gains, being an instrument of sustaining the group's territorial domination (see also Dowdney 2005; Rodgers 2009).

While older Moscow residents remember the whole of the city being divided into different groups' territories, nowadays these groups tend to be concentrated at the outskirts of the city. This pattern of territoriality confined to the city periphery seems to be characteristic of large urban settlements in Russia, although in small and medium-sized towns territorial groups tend to be geographically more dispersed (Golovin and Lurie 2008).

One of the key cultural practices of the Moscow street gangs is arranged combat – a ritual where members of different territorial groups meet to stage a fight under certain conditions and limitations. Apart from being a way to resolve individual confrontations, arranged combats are used by different street groups to test their strength, settle disputes or confirm territorial boundaries. Arranged



Figure 27.5 Moscow housing estates associated with street gangs. Urban street gangs in Moscow are typically situated in old industrial territories, like these two areas in Southern and South-Eastern Moscow. These territories are divided into industrial zones and 'dormitory' zones with high population density. Since the start of the market reforms, many large industrial enterprises in these territories have gone through several waves of redundancies. The average price of housing here is lower than in other Moscow regions, and the area attracts significant migration.

Photos: Georgy Krasnikov (top); nedomoskvich.ru (bottom).

Table 27.4 Summary of gang structures, types of violence and targets of violence, Kazan and Moscow

	<i>Kazan</i>	<i>Moscow</i>
Gang structure	Hierarchical with leadership and internal discipline.	Largely egalitarian with informal leadership.
Types of violence	Instrumental and entrepreneurial violence.	Spontaneous and at times ritualized in the form of arranged combats.
Targets of violence	Businesses and individual entrepreneurs in licit and illicit economies.	Local non-gang members and representatives of groups defined as the 'enemies' (homosexuals, members of ethnic and racial minorities, members of youth subcultures, etc.).

combat limits the risks and dangers of violent confrontations. The members agree in advance on the approximate number of fighters and whether weapons, such as chains, clubs or knuckledusters, but never guns or knives, can be used. The friends of the members often come to watch the fights and record them on their mobile phones; these videos are now often uploaded to social media websites, such as YouTube. The fight is turned into a festivity which celebrates violence and unleashes collective emotions and energies (Stephenson 2012). Agreed-upon rules of collective fights limit violence to more controlled and ordered forms (Ben-Ari and Fruhstuck 2003; Bloch 1986; Collins 2009; Girard 2005).

Responses to Gang Violence in Kazan and Moscow

The key responses of the Russian law enforcement agencies to street gang violence are: measures to 'disassociate' the gangs; attempts at surveillance of gang membership through registration and monitoring; investigation and assessment of individual cases to see if a gang member can be 'normalized' in the community; and criminal prosecution for more serious crimes. 'Disassociation' is aimed at undermining gang solidarity and at isolation of the leaders. Police officers talk to young people and try to persuade them to stop their gang affiliations. They also try to involve parents in these efforts. Sometimes they deliberately insinuate that this or that gang member is a police informer in order to sow discord in the gang. The police conduct special raids on places where gang members congregate and register any arrested gang members. Those who are caught are typically charged with 'minor hooliganism' or violation of public order. Anyone under 14 is taken to the police division for minors, and older gang members are processed by the police criminal investigation divisions, which have special gang task forces (Safarov 2012; Stephenson 2015).

All identified gang members are registered in a special database, where they remain for six months. If at the end of that time they have not been arrested again and have a positive report from their official workplace or place of study, they are removed from the register. The police also visit neighbours and ask them for references for the young person in question in order to decide whether to remove the person from the database. If there is no evidence of improvement of behaviour, the registration is extended. Once registered, underage gang members are sent to the special police divisions for minors for 're-education', which typically involves discussion with a police inspector. Schools and parents are informed and gang members are invited to sessions of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Minors, which sits under the regional Prosecution Office. This is attended by representatives from the Prosecution Office, the chair of the Commission on Minors of the district administration, representatives of the military commissariat, and the district Department of Education. Juvenile gang members attend with their parents. These efforts are aimed at subjecting gang members to enhanced levels of community control. Recently, the Russian Ministry of Education has issued

an order requiring school teachers to inform the police if any of their students belong to ‘criminal subcultures’. Whilst some of these measures look similar to the components of public health models in other countries, such as the UK, Russian authorities have made little explicit reference to the substantial body of public health literature when outwardly framing their responses to gang violence (Stephenson 2015).

Although there are no statistical data on prosecutions for specific activities associated with street gang membership, interviews with police experts and with gang members show that prosecutions tend to be for minor offences such as violation of public order and minor hooliganism, as well as burglaries, grievous bodily harm and drug-related offences (Stephenson 2015). Whilst the organization of, and participation in, an organized criminal group (OPG) or community (OPS) is a criminal offence according to articles 209 and 210 of the Russian Criminal Code, gang-associated youths are not routinely prosecuted simply for being part of a gang, associating with gang members or wearing gang colours.

Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö

Despite a proliferation of gangs and urban violence in Sweden, there is a paucity of academic research on Swedish street gangs. Alongside the academic neglect, there has been a general reluctance by government authorities to recognize street gangs as an emerging internal security challenge. Where attention has centred on gangs, the concept of ‘organized crime groups’ has typically been preferred over ‘street gangs’. However, what Swedish authorities consider to be organized crime groups could often be classified as street gangs under the Eurogang definition.⁶ Indeed, there is a fundamental lack of clarity around the concepts of gangs, crime networks and organized crime in Sweden (for further discussion, see Rostami 2016; Rostami and Leinfelt 2012).

The lack of academic attention in combination with difficulties in gathering information on gangs – both from law enforcement agencies and from other sources – has resulted in limited data on gang membership. However, new attempts are being made to strengthen the data on gangs and organized crime in Sweden (see IFFS 2017), with one notable exception being the Stockholm Gang Intervention Program (SGIP). In 2009, SGIP started as an attempt in developing innovative gang prevention strategies by understanding Swedish street gangs through the lens of the extant international street gang literature. Within the framework of this project, a number of studies emerged which have begun to shed light on the development and key characteristics of street gangs in Sweden (Leinfelt and Rostami 2012; Rostami and Leinfelt 2012; Rostami, Leinfelt, and Brotherton 2012; Rostami, Leinfelt, and Holgersson 2012). This section is also based on ongoing research⁷ that studies the organization of antagonistic groups, such as the crime–terror nexus, and includes recent data on gun violence in the metropolitan areas of Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö.

Demographics of Gang Members

In an attempt to study Swedish street gangs, Rostami, Leinfelt, and Holgersson (2012) applied the Klein and Maxson (2006) gang typology on a dataset of seven Swedish street gangs, including individual-level data on 239 gang members (all gang members in the dataset study were males). This research found that gang members ranged in age from 15 to 49 years and that the mean and median age varied between the examined gangs, ranging from a mean age of 23 years to a mean age of 34 depending which gang was studied. Based on this study it appears that Swedish gang members are similar to gang members in other European nations but have a higher mean age than that previously reported in relation to street gangs in the USA (Klein et al. 2006). According to an international survey of students between the ages of 12 and 15 – the Second International Self-Report Delinquency Study (Gatti et al. 2011, p. 208) – 6.8 per cent of Swedish respondents were members of ‘deviant

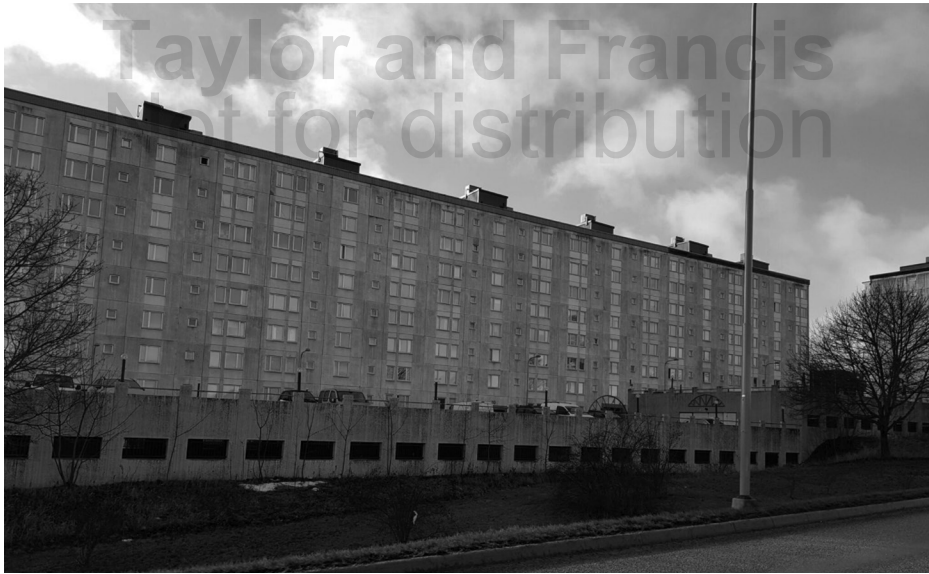


Figure 27.6 Rinkeby in the district of the Rinkeby-Kista borough (top) and Tensta in the district of the Spånga-Tensta borough (bottom), city of Stockholm, Sweden. Built in the 1960s, Rinkeby and Tensta were part of the so-called Swedish million program, a public housing initiative of the 1960s and 1970s. Rinkeby and Tensta reflect the typical design of residential areas of the million program, suburban neighbourhoods with high concentrations of housing blocks together with a range of services, including shopping centres, schools and libraries. Today these suburban neighbourhoods are part of the police list of 'especially vulnerable areas', socioeconomically disadvantaged communities characterized by very high crime and poverty rates.

Source: Amir Rostami.

youth groups', defined as 'any durable, street-oriented youth group whose own identity includes involvement in illegal activity'.

Swedish street gangs are ethnically heterogeneous in terms both of ethnic ties and of country of birth. Gang membership is not related to a specific ethnicity, region or culture. As is the case in countries around the world, street gangs in Sweden tend to be concentrated in areas of relatively high socioeconomic deprivation (see Figure 27.6).

Roughly 42 per cent of members are born in Sweden and 76 per cent are first- or second-generation immigrants from 35 different countries (Rostami, Leinfelt, and Holgersson 2012). In 2012, the duration of the seven street gangs varied between 2 and 18 years. However, today four of the seven have been dissolved, which is in concert with what has previously been reported on US and European street gangs having up to a five-year duration (Klein et al. 2006).

Gang-Related Violence and Offending

In recent years, a number of high-profile incidents have pushed gang-related violence up the political agenda in Sweden. In March 2015, two young adults were killed and eight injured in a gang-related mass shooting (SVT 2016). In June 2015, a car bomb targeting a gang member killed three young men and a four-year-old girl (Aftonbladet 2016). In August 2016, an eight-year-old boy was killed when a hand grenade was thrown into an apartment in an attempted assassination of a gang member (Aftonbladet 2016). Police stations and police officials were targeted by hand grenade attacks and other explosive devices in 2017 (Göteborgs Posten 2017). Whilst drive-by shootings, associated primarily with American gangs, are now a feature of the Swedish gang landscape, the latter is also characterized by the use of hand grenades and car bombs. In addition, there are signs that there may be a nexus between gangs and violent extremism in Sweden (Sturup and Rostami 2017).

Street gangs in Sweden have versatile criminal behaviour patterns involving a wide range of offences, from minor to serious, including property offences, drug-related offences, public disorder, weapon offences, and various violent crimes such as robberies, assaults and homicides. However, there is one case of specialized criminal behaviour pattern. Whilst none of the street gangs examined in the study seems to be territorially bounded, recent developments and law enforcement reports indicate that the emerging street gangs are less formally organized than the first generations of street gangs in Sweden. They are more territorially bounded with local focus, are more violent and have lesser duration (Polismyndigheten 2015, 2017). However, more qualitative and quantitative research is needed to understand the current organization of street gangs and assess recent trends in Sweden.

Sweden has witnessed a dramatic change in gun violence in the last 20 years (Granath and Sturup 2018; Khoshnood 2017; Rostami 2017; Sturup, Rostami, Gerell et al. 2018; Sturup, Rostami, Mondani et al. 2018). There has been an overall increase in the rate of being a victim and a perpetrator of a violent crime committed with a firearm, which is especially pronounced in individuals aged 15 to 29 years. There was also an increase in both fatal and non-fatal gun victimization between 1996 and 2015 regarding males over the age of 15 and males aged between 15 and 29 years. A similar pattern can be found for gun victimization, with an overall rate of homicidal gun victimization of 0.1 per 100,000 inhabitants for females and 0.4 per 100,000 inhabitants for males (Sturup, Rostami, Mondani et al. 2018). The trend seems to be that gun violence is becoming concentrated in urban areas. The National Council for Crime Prevention (2015) stated that the distribution of violence in Sweden in the 2000s has become increasingly similar to that in countries such as the Netherlands, Germany and Spain, where violence is concentrated in urban areas, and less like that in Northern European countries such as Finland and Estonia.

While there has been sporadic use of hand grenades by gangs in Sweden, there has been a trend towards their increasing use: in 2010 there was just one recorded detonated hand grenade attack, in 2011 there were two, and in 2016 there were 39. Overall, between 2011 and 2016, 1,165 shootings

and 54 hand grenade attacks were identified in the three largest cities in Sweden: Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö (Sturup, Rostami, Gerell et al. 2018). Near-repeat patterns were found with a significantly elevated risk of a new near-repeat shooting within a relatively small distance and time period in all three cities. This retaliatory violence is taken to be gang-related conflict (Rostami 2017; Sturup, Rostami, Mondani et al. 2018).

Whilst the largest share of firearm offenders (in relation to deadly and non-deadly shootings) in Eastern, Southern and Western Europe are aged between 30 and 34, in Northern Europe the largest share are aged between 20 and 24. This trend is explained by a 'huge presence of gangs in Sweden who are composed of young men dealing with local criminal activities and internal struggles' (Savona and Mancuso 2017, p. 24). Indeed, crime groups that predominantly fit the Eurogang definition of street gangs have been recognized as one of the greatest challenges to the security of at least 23 socioeconomically deprived areas in Sweden (Polismyndigheten 2017).

Responses to Gang Violence

The increase in urban violence has contributed to an awakening in the policy community to the fact that Sweden has a serious gang problem. For example, the Swedish prime minister, Stefan Löfven, announced that 'gang crime is going to be broken down', and the Swedish interior minister stated that gangs will meet the 'iron fist' of the authorities after a series of gang-related serious crime incidents (*Dagens Nyheter* 2017). This awakening has occurred at the same time as the largest police reform in the history of Sweden, in which 21 independent county police authorities have been replaced by one national police force (Polissamordningen 2015). Owing to the rate of gun crime, particularly in the largest three cities in Sweden, some efforts to turn the tide on violent crime have been made. Several long-time police operations have been initiated to allocate and concentrate police resources to designated areas, such as operations Mareld, Tore, Fenix, Selma and Trygg i Göteborg. These operations have mainly been built around coordinated police investigations, direct patrolling, proactive arrest, multi-agency cooperation and administrative measures together with tougher legislation against criminals.

In 2017, the Swedish police were planning to implement methods based on group violence interventions (GVIs), family liaison officers (FLOs) and the reinsertion of special gang units as a method of reducing gun crime in general and gang-related gun crime in particular (Polismyndigheten 2017). Whilst there have been some attempts to reduce violence in Sweden based on public health principles, there is little evidence of the public health literature shaping responses to gang violence more specifically. Some of the responses noted above (particularly the use of FLOs) appear to parallel components of public health models for gang-related violence reduction in other countries, but they have not been outwardly framed as public health approaches by the Swedish authorities. Finally, it is important to note that these gang violence reduction initiatives are yet to be subject to robust evaluative research.

Discussion

It is important to reflect on some of the conclusions made by the authors of a paper on street gang violence in Europe published over a decade ago and to consider the extent to which those conclusions are supported or challenged by the contemporary portraits of gang-related violence provided in this chapter (see Klein et al. 2006). First, the paper suggested that the levels and severity of gang-related youth violence were generally lower in European countries than in the United States. Considering the nature and scale of gang violence in many US cities at the time of writing, this assertion continues to be uncontentious. In 2015, for example, whilst there were 165 gang-related homicides in Los Angeles, the highest number of gang-related homicides in a UK city was just 11, in London (LAPD 2016).

The authors of each country profile in the 2006 paper also observed that gang members appear to engage in substantially higher rates of violence than their non-gang peers and that gang involvement enhances violence over and above the impact of association with delinquent peers (Klein et al. 2006). Again, these statements appear well supported by recent research. In relation to the cities covered in this chapter, evidence is provided in the form of both quantitative data on gang-related offending and qualitative studies, which establish reasonable grounds for expecting enhanced levels of violence amongst those involved in gangs. One conclusion from the earlier work in particular, however, is not supported by the findings presented in this chapter. The authors of the 2006 paper concluded that 'in many cases territoriality seems to be absent in European gangs' (Klein et al. 2006, p. 433). In recent years, it is clear that territoriality *has* played a central role in gang-related violence in a number of European cities. In relation to Moscow, for example, we have seen how territory is central to both gang identities and violence between rival gangs. In London, gang members typically view incursion into a rival gang's territory as an effective means of bolstering one's status and reputation, as well as a means of humiliating one's rivals and provoking a response. Similarly, in Brussels, whilst territory seems relatively unimportant to Maghrebin and mixed gangs, it appears to play a greater role in violence perpetrated by Sub-Saharan gangs.

With regard to responses to gang-related violence, compared to the US context there appear to be almost no robust evaluation studies of particular approaches in the European context. Whilst public health approaches to reducing gang-related youth violence, such as the use of home visits, parenting programmes, talking therapies, and school-based social and emotional development programmes, have been advocated in the UK, they have invariably been implemented on insufficient resources, and there is a lack of evidence for their effectiveness (Catch22 2013; Pitts 2017; UK Faculty of Public Health 2016). In Russia, Belgium and Sweden, there is little explicit reference to public health literature in official policy responses to gang violence, nor do initiatives aimed at tackling gang violence appear to be based on public health principles. It is worth noting that this contrasts significantly with anti-gang initiatives in the USA, which often display a closer affiliation with public health approaches to violence reduction (Simon et al. 2013).

It is worth noting that researchers studying gangs in Europe typically have had to rely on quantitative data from government agencies – predominantly the police – to analyse the various forms and amount of gang-related violence. Whilst this has provided some important insights, reliance on police statistics serves to highlight the general lack of reliable data on youth gang involvement and gang-related violence across Europe. Whilst a better quality and quantity of data are collected and published by US criminal justice agencies compared to those in Europe, it is worth noting that a substantial body of evidence in the US has also been generated by studies involving surveys with school students (see, for example, Decker and Curry 2000; Esbensen et al. 2013; Pyrooz 2014; Swahn et al. 2010). As a significant number of gang-involved young people in some parts of the USA are school attendees, these studies have produced valuable insights into gangs and gang-related violence.

In European cities, however, data generated by similar methods are of questionable value. In cities such as London, for example, a relatively low number of young people are involved in street gangs. Of this small sub-group of young people, research indicates that up to two-thirds have been permanently excluded from mainstream education (Home Office 2011; Pitts 2006). At best, therefore, research using school surveys would produce insights into a small and skewed sub-sample of the wider population of gang-involved young people. At worst, by sampling what is likely to be an unrepresentative group of fringe gang members – or, to use a concept recently developed to measure differential levels of people's involvement in gangs, gang members with low levels of 'embeddedness' (Pyrooz et al. 2013) – it could produce misleading conclusions about the scale and nature of gangs and gang-related violence in European cities.

Instead of sampling young people in mainstream educational facilities, researchers aiming to progress knowledge and understanding of gang-related violence in Europe might find it more fruitful

to engage third sector organizations that work with relatively large numbers of hard-to-reach young people in the community, or with criminal justice bodies, such as youth offending teams in the UK, which supervise convicted gang-involved young offenders. To this end, researchers are well placed to conduct comparative projects owing to the valuable work of the Eurogang network, an ongoing international collaboration of academics and professionals. The network has produced a range of research instruments (translated into several languages), alongside in-depth and comprehensive guidance for researchers intending to conduct comparative research projects on gangs (see Weerman et al. 2009).

Conclusion

Considerable progress has been made in understanding gangs in Europe over the past two decades. At the turn of the century, many researchers, policy makers, criminal justice professionals and political leaders denied the existence of gangs across the continent. In academia, for example, opposition stemmed from researchers opposing knowledge transfer across the Atlantic, opting instead to frame gangs as a uniquely 'American phenomenon'. Many professionals, including politicians, police officers and teachers, downplayed the problems posed by youth gangs, in large part to avoid potentially negative ramifications, such as having to redirect already stretched resources into tackling gang violence (Centre for Social Justice 2012).

Research over the past two decades, however, has provided evidence of the presence of youth gangs in a number of European cities. Whilst the scale of gang violence in US cities is generally greater than in their European counterparts, youth gangs are nevertheless responsible for disproportionate levels of serious violence in Europe. In addition, there are many similarities between gangs in the US and Europe in relation, for example, to the use of weapons and the territorial nature of conflict. But perhaps the most obvious point of convergence for gangs across the globe is their urban context, which acts as a crucible for violence.

The similarities between gangs in the US and Europe offer considerable promise for crafting effective responses based on US models. Learning from mistakes made in the US would put European cities in a stronger position to respond to the growth of youth gangs and avoid mere political posturing. In the US, careful evaluations have documented that suppression and enforcement tactics, when used alone, are ineffective and may make gang violence worse (Greene and Pranis 2007; Kennedy 2011). Successful interventions appear to be multifaceted, consisting of a suppression component that works in tandem with various forms of prevention and opportunities provision, crisis intervention and re-organizing of existing services based on public health principles (Simon et al. 2013). In the past, many interventions have been well developed but poorly implemented, or not sustained when implemented.

At the same time that specialized gang responses are developed, it is important to address the fundamental macro-level social and economic factors that drive the growth of youth gangs and the violence that accompanies them. These include gross income inequality, concentrated poverty, burgeoning illicit drug markets, a lack of productive employment, and educational systems that fail to educate. As these are concentrated in urban areas, it is no surprise that these are the places where gangs are found to flourish.

Notes

- 1 The racial disproportionality of gang members reported in these data is greater even than that for the US.
- 2 DBSBU is the acronym of Database Stadsbendes/Bandes Urbaines and contains all registered gang members. It is managed by the federal police.
- 3 In Belgian law ethnicity cannot be included as a variable in official crime registration (statistics). This categorization is made on the basis of police field knowledge.

- 4 This is similar to the changes in the social composition of Italian mafia families between the 1950s and 1970s, although one difference is that mafia members must have no personal or family links to the police – this is not the case in Kazan (Arlacchi 1986).
- 5 At the time of writing, the rate of unemployment was under 1.5 per cent.
- 6 The Eurogang approach defines a street gang as ‘any durable, street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of its group identity’ (Weerman et al. 2009).
- 7 Supported by grants from the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB 2016–486, 2016–7045).

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